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SIPDIS

FOR EAP/BCLTV DOUG SONNEK; EAP/EP MEREDITH MILLER

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SUBJECT: VIETNAM IS NOT READY FOR APEC 2006

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1. (SBU) Summary. The Government of Vietnam (GVN) is struggling to prepare for APEC 2006 and faces a steep uphill battle. Vice Foreign Minister Le Cong Phung told the Ambassador during a luncheon on September 23 that Vietnam "does not have much time" to prepare for APEC and will seek help from fellow APEC economies. Phung acknowledged that Vietnam still needed to compose an APEC roadmap and draft agenda, hopefully before the APEC Leaders meeting in November. The Ambassador stressed that the GVN needed to give a clear signal soon of its APEC 2006 intentions and goals. The Ambassador also reiterated the four main U.S. APEC priorities for APEC 2005. End Summary.

VIETNAM'S PREPARATION FOR APEC 2006

2. (SBU) The Ambassador hosted a luncheon September 22 with Vietnam's main APEC working players, including Vice Foreign Minister Le Cong Phung, to discuss APEC issues. Phung recently replaced Vice Foreign Minister Vu Dzong as Vietnam's Senior Official for APEC 2006 and the coordinator of all APEC issues. Also present were Mr. Cao Tran Quoc Hai, Deputy Director General, Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA); Ms. Nguyen Le Thanh, Head of APEC Division, MOFA; Ms. Tran Thi Thu Hang, Deputy Director General, Multilateral Trade Policy Department, Ministry of Trade (MOT) and Vietnam's Senior APEC 2005 Official; and Ms. Ngu Hoang Thuy, Head of APEC/ASEAN Division, MOT.

3. (SBU) Vice Minister Phung opened the meeting by saying that Vietnam "does not have much time" to prepare for APEC 2006. The GVN faces an uphill battle in completing its preparations and will eventually need help from other APEC economies. The Ambassador offered to help Vietnam, but stressed that the GVN first needs to send a clear signal to other APEC economies about its intentions and goals for APEC 2006. Phung confirmed that the GVN is struggling to prepare a draft agenda before the Busan Leaders Summit and added that Vietnam will face "a lot of trouble" because it still does not have a "roadmap" for APEC 2006.

4. (SBU) According to Phung, Vietnam tentatively plans to host Senior Officials Meetings in February, June and September 2006. The APEC 2006 Leaders Meeting is scheduled for the week of November 12-19, 2006. On logistics, Phung admitted that Vietnam faces a hotel shortage for APEC 2006, but he was confident that the problem could be resolved. The Vice Minister warned that Vietnam's APEC "facilities will not be as good as Bangkok" but added that a new convention center will be ready in September 2006 for APEC. The Ambassador suggested that Vietnam consider allowing Embassy officials to begin working with the GVN on security planning for senior APEC officials.

U.S. AND VIETNAM'S APEC PRIORITIES

5. (SBU) The Ambassador outlined the top four U.S. priorities for APEC 2005 (trade liberalization, human security, intellectual property rights protection and anti-corruption), noting that these issues will remain important in 2006. He emphasized that infectious diseases including Avian Influenza should be considered by APEC and asked that Vietnam officially join the International Partnership for Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI). Vice Minister Phung and Senior APEC Official Hang agreed that the United States' points were important and were currently being considered by the GVN, including the IPAPI proposal. On trade and investment, the Ambassador asked Vietnam to consider moving the Transnational Corporations seminar to the margins of the Investment Experts Group meeting in early 2006. Senior APEC Official Hang suggested that U.S. APEC officials consider moving this meeting to some date between SOM I and SOM II instead, tying it to a public/private trade facilitation meeting that Vietnam will host.

6. (SBU) MOFA's Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation Deputy Director General Hai said that the three main APEC 2005 security priorities for Vietnam are: MANPADS Initiatives; Avian Influenza; and Regional Security. Hai requested that the USG apprise the GVN about all its APEC

positions leading up to the Busan Conference.

17. (SBU) Comment: With the exception of Vice Minister Phung, Post's Economic Section staff have previously met with the other GVN APEC officials present during the past few months. This meeting, unfortunately, only confirmed our earlier understanding that the GVN is still well behind in its preparations for APEC 2006. The GVN needs to act now in order to be ready in time. This message needs to be reiterated by all other APEC economies whenever possible. End Comment.

MARINE